



## **News for Immediate Release**

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### **DWR May Snow Survey Shows Low Water Content**

SACRAMENTO – The Department of Water Resources (DWR) final snow survey of 2008 indicates snow water content is just 67 percent of normal for the date, statewide. Snow depth and water content have declined since April, when statewide snowpack water content figures were just under 100 percent of normal, despite a dry March.

“Today’s conditions further underscore the need for immediate action to solve California’s water supply and delivery problems,” said DWR Director Lester Snow. “We must take immediate steps to protect the Delta ecosystem, conserve more water and develop additional groundwater and surface storage facilities to meet our future needs.”

Governor Schwarzenegger has outlined those steps through a comprehensive plan that includes water conservation, more surface and groundwater storage, new investments in the state’s aging water infrastructure, and improved water conveyance through or around the Delta to protect the environment and provide a reliable water supply.

Much of the water content is being absorbed by parched soil as a result of last year’s extremely dry weather. March and April 2008 combined are the driest in the northern Sierra since 1921, the first year that records were kept. Water runoff into streams and reservoirs is only 55 to 65 percent of normal.

Electronic sensor readings show northern Sierra snow water equivalents at 88 percent of normal for this date, central Sierra at 61 percent, and southern Sierra at 60 percent. The sensor readings are posted at <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/snow/DLYSWEQ>.

Storage in California’s major reservoirs is also low because of last year’s dry conditions. Lake Oroville, the principal storage reservoir for the State Water Project (SWP), is at 48 percent of capacity, and 58 percent of average storage for this time of year.

Continuing dry conditions and court-ordered restrictions on Delta water exports are limiting water deliveries to farms and urban areas. DWR estimates that it will only be able to deliver 35 percent of requested SWP water this year to the Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast and Southern California.

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In December 2007, U.S. District Court Judge Oliver Wanger imposed restrictions on water deliveries from the Delta to protect the threatened Delta smelt. This has significantly decreased deliveries to homes, farms, cities and industry by both the State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project. In June 2008, Judge Wanger will begin hearings to discuss the possibility of further reducing pumping from the Delta – the hub of California's water system – to help protect Chinook salmon and Central Valley steelhead

**May 1, 2008 DWR manual survey results**

Location	Elevation	Snow Depth	Water Content	% of Long Term Average
Alpha	7,600 feet	31 inches	16.5 inches	63
Phillips Station	6,800 feet	3.29 inches	1.7 inches	11
Lyons Creek	6,700 feet	28.9 inches	14.3 inches	63
Tamarack Flat	6,500 feet	26.3 inches	13.8 inches	75

**Importance of Snow Surveying**

Snow water content is important in determining the coming year's water supply. The measurements help hydrologists prepare water supply forecasts as well as provide others, such as hydroelectric power companies and the recreation industry, with much needed data.

Monitoring is coordinated by the Department of Water Resources as part of the multi-agency California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program. Surveyors from more than 50 agencies and utilities visit hundreds of snow measurement courses in California's mountains each month to gauge the amount of water in the snowpack.

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*The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.*

Contact the [DWR Public Affairs Office](#) for more information about DWR's water activities.